United Nations E/2016/34 (Part I)-E/ICEF/2016/7 (Part I)

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 March 2016

Original: English

Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2016

(2-3 February 2016)*

* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the first, annual and second regular sessions of 2016, to be issued as parts I, II, and III, respectively. These reports will be issued in final form as *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2016, Supplement No. 14* (E/2016/34/Rev.1-E/ICEF/2016/7/Rev.1).

16-04169 (E) 010416

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. The Executive Board elected as President the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson, and as Vice-Presidents the Permanent Representative of Libya to the United Nations, Ibrahim O. A. Dabbashi, the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations, Durga Prasad Bhattarai, the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, Walton Alfonso Webson, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations, Hiroshi Minami.

B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

2. The President of the Executive Board stated that the year had begun with great optimism as the international community embarked on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related goals and targets. There were good reasons for optimism: the well-being and rights of children were well reflected in the Goals, there was a clear road map that included nations of every size and income level, there was renewed political will and determination to finance results adequately, and valuable knowledge and experience had been gained from working towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Other milestones achieved in 2015 included the positive outcomes of the conferences on financing for development and climate change, as well as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

3. Shadowing this optimism, however, were severe challenges, including complex emergencies, an escalating number and intensity of armed conflicts and an unprecedented number of protracted crises, the increasing occurrence of natural disasters, many of which are linked to climate change, and the pervasive and growing threat of terrorism. Those issues had fuelled an extreme refugee crisis, with an estimated 60 million people displaced around the world, half of them children. Such challenges could set back development by decades and had one characteristic in common: their devastating effects on children.

4. The President recognized the work of the staff of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in favour of children living in dangerous situations. One reason the organization's humanitarian work was so effective was that UNICEF and its partners worked with children, families and communities before, during and after crises, and aimed to erase the demarcation between regular and emergency programming. This was a must in a world increasingly affected by conflicts. Accountability with regard to the affected people, especially youth and children, needed to be systematically highlighted and integrated into the outcomes of the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit (23-24 May 2016).

5. It was unfortunate that the increasing work of UNICEF in humanitarian settings was taking a toll on the organization's resources. Despite the desperate plight of millions of children, many humanitarian appeals made by UNICEF and its partners continued to remain grossly underfunded. Such indifference to suffering

ought to provoke moral outrage. Mustering the will and resources to support the vital humanitarian work was urgent.

6. The President concluded with a commitment to do his utmost to chair the Executive Board in a spirit of openness and constructive dialogue in order to serve the organization's number one clients: the children of the world.

7. The Executive Director began by bidding farewell to some members of the UNICEF family, in particular Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, whose many accomplishments, friendship and tireless dedication to the rights of the world's children were praised.

8. The Executive Director spoke of the two significant diplomatic successes of 2015: the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (General Assembly resolution 70/1) and that of the Paris Agreement at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

9. Today, addressing climate change was imperative to building a more sustainable future, and must be intertwined with action on the Sustainable Development Goals and humanitarian responses. Without enhanced action on climate change, the diplomatic triumphs of 2015 risked being marred by tragedies. Climate change was very much an equity issue, with its impacts felt most keenly — and most unfairly — by the poorest and most vulnerable. Those impacts worsened the intergenerational cycle of poverty and poor health in which millions were trapped. It slowed or even reversed development progress, and drove displacement, competition and even conflicts. The cycle must be broken if the Sustainable Development Goals were to be achieved and sustainable development promoted after 2030.

10. To help to adapt to the worsening impacts of climate change, UNICEF had identified four areas of priority: advocacy and accountability, climate change adaptation through resilient development, climate change mitigation and "greening" UNICEF. Examples presented showcased how the organization was working with Governments, communities, partners and children around the world to generate support and action for a sustainable future. UNICEF would aim to include a component on climate change in all country programmes by 2020.

11. The World Humanitarian Summit would be an opportunity to discuss ideas such as better integrating appeals to respond to immediate humanitarian crises, including climate-related disasters, as well as to long-term development needs, and developing donor incentives to do so. Flexible financing opportunities, early-warning systems and an enhanced ability to direct development assistance where it was most needed should be considered.

12. The Executive Director concluded with a call for everyone to lend their voices and support to the growing movements of citizens, communities, Governments and non-governmental organizations that advocated for and effected real change, and to prepare tomorrow's generation, today's children, to continue to fight the battle.

13. In national statements delivered during the opening of the session, delegations stressed the importance of the present session as the first formal session of the Executive Board since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the Addis Ababa Action

Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

14. Many delegations expressed serious concerns about the large number of humanitarian crises occurring around the globe and the ongoing refugee crisis. They emphasized the critical role of UNICEF in addressing those complex crises, while also recognizing the effect on the organization's finances. Speakers applauded the leadership that UNICEF provided in education and psychosocial care to children in conflict areas, including through the "No Lost Generation" initiative. Several delegations emphasized the need to bridge the divide between development and humanitarian programming and looked to the World Humanitarian Summit as an opportunity to set a forward-looking agenda for all humanitarian actors.

15. Some delegations anticipated further engagement with UNICEF in the preparation of the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017. The review would provide an opportunity to draw lessons from the first two years of implementation of the Strategic Plan, to reflect on its successes and challenges, to elaborate new priorities and to make efforts to ensure alignment of the work of UNICEF with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It would also be informed by the lessons learned from the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review.

16. Many delegations supported the Executive Director's emphasis on the effects of climate change on children. A group of delegations stated that, perhaps more than any other continent, Africa was vulnerable to multiple risks from climate change, in particular global warming, drought, rising sea levels and increased resource scarcity. Other delegations reported on the devastating effects of a warming climate in their countries, including poor crop yields, dangerously high levels of heat, droughts and flooding, all of which posed great risks to children.

17. Several delegations expressed concern about the reduction in the level of UNICEF regular resources, stressing the importance of that preferred financial modality in ensuring strategic, responsive and predictable planning and decisions for the delivery of results. UNICEF was encouraged to further improve its resource mobilization by exploring new potential strategies, such as in-kind contributions, and by exploring and better using funding modalities that supported integrated delivery and results, with complementarity between humanitarian and development funds. One delegation welcomed the references to South-South cooperation in the resource mobilization strategy, emphasizing that partnerships between developing countries and UNICEF were more effective when they mobilized resources and technical expertise from all partners.

18. Several delegations highlighted the importance of data, particularly as the global community worked towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals over the next 15 years. The availability of reliable, disaggregated data in the global indicator set was crucial. One delegation expressed appreciation for the efforts by UNICEF to help countries to collect, analyse and use data, including support to more than 100 Governments for multiple indicator cluster surveys. Another speaker said that research and data sharing were crucial to translate lessons learned into best practices and to mobilize financial resources efficiently. A clear strategy was needed on how the research function should be positioned within UNICEF and how research would be taken into account in preparations for the next strategic plan.

19. Many delegations welcomed the organization's focus on equity and agreed that the Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without reversing the vicious cycle of inequity in which millions of children were trapped. One delegation recognized the difficulty of the starting point, given evidence of huge levels of wealth inequality. Another delegation reaffirmed its commitment to intergenerational equity and equality, which should inspire actions relating to climate change and economic growth.

20. A number of speakers urged continued attention to middle-income countries. One suggested that they be a priority area for joint efforts by UNICEF and the concerned States, in particular because the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development did not include a special focus on those countries. Another speaker reported that, following the classification of his country as an upper-middle-income country, traditional donor funding had drastically declined, thereby compromising the effectiveness of the UNICEF country programme. The speaker urged donor countries and other development partners to continue funding the work of UNICEF in middle-income countries so that Governments might have a chance to fully implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

21. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania expressed concerns about the co-sponsorship by UNICEF of a film that had been screened at the United Nations in October 2015 and that had sought to highlight the situation of persons with albinism in that country. He stressed that his Government was committed to protecting persons with albinism, including through broad-based interventions that adhered to human rights principles and the rule of law.

C. Adoption of the agenda

22. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2016/1/Rev.2) for the session.

23. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 34 observer delegations, including one intergovernmental organization, nine National Committees for UNICEF and one non-governmental organization had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings

24. Following introductory remarks by the Director, Programme Division, the Associate Director, HIV/AIDS, presented the report.

25. Delegations commended the important gains that had been achieved in the fight against HIV/AIDS, highlighting the critical role of UNICEF as a co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Nevertheless, several delegations expressed concern about the continued challenges, including the particular vulnerabilities of adolescents and the increase in AIDS-related deaths among them, especially in Africa.

26. Some delegations emphasized the importance of prevention, especially among adolescents, saying that education and involving adolescents in prevention efforts were crucial. Several delegations welcomed platforms such as the "All In to #endAdolescentAIDS" initiative, which had succeeded because of effective coordination with partners, including adolescents. One delegation urged access to treatment for persons infected with HIV, while also taking measures to prevent new infections.

27. Several delegations expressed concern about a decrease in funding for UNAIDS and the possibility of setbacks in the successes of the response to HIV/AIDS, including the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. A group of delegations said that large increases in funding could not be expected, and emphasized the importance of doing more with less by developing and strengthening partnerships and improving ways of working.

28. Another group of delegations recognized the success of UNICEF in prioritizing the needs of children and adolescents affected by HIV and thanked the organization for its commitment to achieving an AIDS-free generation. The speaker encouraged UNICEF to work closely with existing initiatives, such as the Commitment on Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Adolescents and Young People in Eastern and Southern Africa. The group also commended UNICEF for heightening the focus on HIV among populations affected by humanitarian crises, and for its efforts to maintain testing and treatment in areas affected by recent emergencies, including the Central African Republic, Malawi, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Ukraine. Another delegation said that, in view of the refugee streams and number of global conflicts, it remained very important for UNICEF to address the needs of children living with HIV and pregnant women affected by emergencies.

29. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for its work on the disaggregation and analysis of data, which had produced evidence of the increase in AIDS-related deaths among adolescents, even as the number of new cases of HIV had declined overall. The group highlighted the importance of disaggregated data, especially regarding sex and age, and requested that UNICEF undertake more sex-specific analysis and reporting.

30. The group commended the UNAIDS Fast-Track Strategy, which was structured around the Sustainable Development Goals and placed the 90-90-90 treatment target at centre stage, with the prioritization for the period 2016 to 2021 of 35 countries that, together, accounted for nearly 90 per cent of all new HIV infections. It was particularly important that UNAIDS and the co-sponsors focus on children and adolescents in efforts to reach that target.

31. The representative of Cuba reported that his country had been certified by the World Health Organization in 2015 as the first to eliminate the vertical transmission of HIV from mother to child and the congenital transmission of syphilis. The Director, Programme Division, commended Cuba for that important achievement.

B. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

32. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the oral update on humanitarian action.

33. In general statements made at the opening of the session and during the discussion of the present agenda item, several delegations commended UNICEF for its humanitarian efforts in 2015, expressing their appreciation for the tireless work of its staff in favour of children living in adverse conditions. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to consistently reflect humanitarian issues on the agenda of Executive Board sessions, in order to keep the Board informed of both progress and challenges.

34. A delegation thanked the organization for the update on the status of the Emergency Programme Fund but noted with regret that, in 2015, a lack of regular resources had left the Fund far from reaching its ceiling of $75 million per annum. This had resulted in the disbursement of only $28.2 million to 15 country offices. Many delegations stressed the importance of contributing to regular resources, and to supporting humanitarian response more specifically.

35. Another delegation stated that it was encouraged to hear that UNICEF was pursuing more private sector engagement to support its humanitarian response, including with the technology and telecommunications sectors.

36. Several delegations welcomed the work of UNICEF to break down the silos between humanitarian and development work, commented that UNICEF was uniquely placed to help to eradicate such divisions and agreed that such an approach was a priority for the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit. A delegation asked about the organization's ideas on how to better integrate its "development side" in the response to long-term problems in protracted crisis situations, so as to better use all of the resources available for humanitarian response.

37. Several speakers expressed support for the organization's efforts to ensure education for children in cases of emergency, including through the "No Lost Generation" initiative. The representative of Luxembourg stressed the need to make funding available to ensure that displaced populations could receive an education and, ahead of the Supporting Syria and the Region Conference to be held in London the following day, announced that the contribution of Luxembourg to UNICEF would be quintupled to 2.2 million euros over the next four years. In general statements made at the opening of the session, other delegations announced that they would pledge both core funds and highly flexible humanitarian funds to UNICEF.

38. Several delegations encouraged UNICEF to work with partners to ensure the best possible results from the World Humanitarian Summit. Several speakers cited the report of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing of the United Nations Secretary-General, which included recommendations aimed at increasing efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency. Delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue to increase transparency in the use of funds and to report on the arguments for choosing certain channels of implementation and their related costs.

39. A few delegations called attention to the Zika virus that was spreading across Latin America and the Caribbean. The United Nations system was urged to put in

place measures to track the spread of the virus, identify children with related disabilities and implement risk-reduction measures ahead of the start of the upcoming rainy season in Central America. The delegation of Brazil outlined its Government's plans to launch a national mobilization campaign to fight the virus. The campaign would be directed to, among other people, public service workers, youth and schoolchildren. The country needed to take three priority actions: reporting cases properly, assisting affected families and investing in research. It was committed to work on the issue in a transparent manner and in coordination with the United Nations system and other member States interested in supporting research on the virus.

40. The representative of Nepal expressed appreciation for the immediate support from UNICEF in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in April 2015, which had consisted of emergency supplies of food and medicines, water, sanitation and hygiene equipment and supplies, and education and nutrition assistance in the most affected districts. While the number of child fatalities had been comparatively low, many children had been orphaned or were at risk of being trafficked and abused. Marginalized children and children with disabilities were also in need of special protection measures.

41. A delegation expressed shock and sadness about the findings of the report on the United Nations system's failure to take appropriate action after reports of sexual abuse of children in the Central African Republic. The speaker expressed appreciation for the decisive action that UNICEF had taken to address the issue, and looked forward to updates on further actions taken to ensure internal accountability and address systemic weak points.

42. Many delegations welcomed the work done by UNICEF on innovation. UNICEF was encouraged to continue to seek new and innovative solutions to the complex problems of humanitarian crises. To promote accountability to affected people, a key priority emerging from the consultations in the lead-up the World Humanitarian Summit, the delegation committed to working with the organization to be more innovative in response to emergencies in order to promote community-based feedback mechanisms especially geared to women and young people.

43. A delegation noted that, while the World Humanitarian Summit would be an opportunity to exchange experiences and points of view about the pressing humanitarian challenges around the world, attention should also be paid to the root causes of those issues. The speaker expressed his Government's concern about the lack of intergovernmental debate in the preparatory process for the World Humanitarian Summit.

C. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

44. The President of the Executive Board informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with its decision 2014/1, country programme documents would be considered and approved at the current session, on a no-objection basis. Drafts of the country programme documents for Argentina, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay had been posted on the Executive Board website from 9 to 27 November 2015 to give

members of the Executive Board an opportunity to comment. The comments received had been shared with the respective countries and regional offices and Governments and, where relevant, taken into account in the final versions of the documents now before the Executive Board. A costed evaluation plan for each country programme had been posted on the UNICEF Executive Board website, as had the United Nations Development Assistance Framework results matrices, where applicable. Further discussion was to be held only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme before the Executive Board for further discussion, and the secretariat had received no such requests.

45. During presentations on the present agenda item, as well as in general statements made at the opening of the session, several delegations welcomed the agreement adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the attention that UNICEF paid to the issue, including the plan to include a component on climate change in all country programmes by 2020.

Middle East and North Africa

46. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.6 and E/ICEF/2016/P/L.7). Both countries were in protracted crises, which had reversed decades of progress and risked a lost generation of children. The "No Lost Generation" initiative highlighted two sectors traditionally neglected in humanitarian crises, namely education and protection, and had raised more than $300 million. In both countries, UNICEF was leading the water, sanitation and hygiene, education and nutrition clusters as well as the child protection subcluster, and was supporting the World Health Organization on the health cluster.

47. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic expressed satisfaction with the cooperation between UNICEF and the various ministries in the country and reaffirmed his Government's commitment to continue to support the work of the organization. He thanked UNICEF for developing the multi-year country programme of cooperation and noted that UNICEF had supported programmes that had reached about 5 million internally displaced children who were no longer enjoying security in their homes. Millions of Syrian children were also being deprived of their rights in refugee camps, received inadequate education or were being trafficked or mobilized into armed groups. The lack of funding had hampered humanitarian efforts by UNICEF and the Government.

48. The representative of Iraq expressed appreciation for the work of UNICEF, which, despite daunting challenges, had achieved several successes in the country, in cooperation with national partners. The Government of Iraq welcomed the priorities contained in the country programme document, including the special focus on health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education, child protection, adolescent development, enhanced social policies and coordination during emergencies, and it would continue to cooperate with UNICEF to implement the national strategy, with a special focus on pregnant mothers and the health of the child, over the period 2016-2019.

Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States

49. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Azerbaijan (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.1). The programme was centred on strengthening national and local capacity, fostering clear accountabilities for child rights, modern management practices and more equitable allocation of resources at decentralized levels, especially among the populations that were most difficult to reach.

50. The representative of Azerbaijan referred to examples of successful cooperation with UNICEF, including the organization's contributions in the areas of advocacy and early education, which had leveraged government resources for the sustainable financing of early education, a recent cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection that had led to the drafting of a new law on the rights of persons with disabilities, and the support of UNICEF for the country's agenda that had led to the establishment of a countrywide public service. In a statement made at the opening of the session, the delegation had expressed the country's pride in its decades-long productive cooperation with UNICEF, and reported that more than $2 million had been allocated through the Government for targeted joint activities, including social allowances for the most vulnerable children and adolescents and their families.

51. The representative of Armenia recognized the important global role of UNICEF and took note of the structured dialogue with Member States in preparing the new cycle of country programme documents for the period 2016-2020. The delegation expressed concern about what it considered to be political language in the country programme document for Azerbaijan. The delegation said that the language of all United Nations programme documents should be harmonized and consistent, and that the country programme documents prepared by UNICEF should be aligned with those prepared by other United Nations agencies.

52. After further interventions by both delegations, the President and the Executive Director reminded delegations that UNICEF was an organization focused on alleviating the suffering and promoting the well-being of children, and stressed the non-political nature of its mandate.

Eastern and Southern Africa

53. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.2 and E/ICEF/2016/P/L.3), and thanked the Governments of those two countries for their continued support and strong partnership with UNICEF. Both programmes would support national efforts to reduce child poverty and produce results for children, with a particular focus on hard-to-reach areas and population groups. In both countries, programme implementation would employ a mix of strategies, including the development and strengthening of national capacity, evidence-based advocacy and technical assistance, communication and strategic partnerships and enhanced linkages between different sectors.

54. The representative of Ethiopia said that the preparation and finalization of the country programme document had taken place at a critical time, when Ethiopia was finalizing the second new five-year goal in its Growth and Transformation Plan and starting its implementation. The document, which had been thoroughly discussed with stakeholders, in terms of development, humanitarian gaps and challenges and

UNICEF comparative advantages, was thus fully aligned with national priorities and needs, as well as the national medium-term plan. Although Ethiopia had made remarkable progress in economic growth, poverty reduction and the achievement of many of the Millennium Development Goals, millions of people — in particular children and women — were still living in extreme poverty and required basic social services, and a lot of work remained to be done.

55. The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania said that the Government believed that the adoption of the country programme document would further strengthen coordination and enhance the role of UNICEF to complement government efforts to promote child welfare. He took note of the challenges relating to the promotion and protection of child welfare and reiterated his country's commitment to promote and protect the quality of life and well-being of children.

Latin America and Caribbean

56. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Argentina and Uruguay (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.4 and E/ICEF/2016/P/L.5). The programmes had been developed on the basis of the respective national priorities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017.

57. The representative of Argentina welcomed the country programme, which aimed to support and complement government efforts to ensure children's full enjoyment of their rights by promoting their social inclusion, in particular that of the most vulnerable and marginalized children. As there had recently been a change of Government, in the coming months Argentina would negotiate with UNICEF a specific action plan for the country programme focussing on the protection and promotion of the rights of children and adolescents. The five elements of the country programme — social inclusion and monitoring the rights of the child, inclusive and good-quality education, protection and justice for children and adolescents, the health and well-being of children and adolescents, and the mobilization of resources — would facilitate a greater enhancement of the systems and capacities for designing, coordinating, presenting and funding policies relating to children. The programme would give particular attention to adolescents in areas such as education, health, participation and empowerment, and gender awareness.

58. The representative of Uruguay expressed appreciation for the work of UNICEF, in particular the country programme's focus on education and child health, among other areas. The examination of areas such as early childhood, education and child protection, as outlined in the country programme document, would assist Uruguay in its efforts to achieve the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Government was particularly concerned about persistent levels of child poverty and low graduation rates, including a completion rate of secondary education of only 38 per cent. Large numbers of children were living in institutions, with the country ranking fourth in the region in terms of the rate of institutionalized children. While progress had been seen in many areas, several factors that had an adverse effect on children persisted. The Government looked forward to continuing to work with UNICEF to meet the real and critical needs of children in a sustainable manner.

59. Another speaker welcomed efforts by UNICEF to address climate change, as well as the elements of those two country programmes to promote the inclusion of

children with disabilities. He urged the acceleration of efforts to collect, analyse and monitor data on the progress of children with disabilities within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals, which would ensure that this vulnerable group, in particular girls with disabilities, was not left behind.

60. A delegation congratulated UNICEF for undertaking work to analyse the national priorities of the States with which it implemented country programmes of cooperation. The delegation suggested that, to improve education outcomes, the organization set up an evaluation and monitoring committee comprising representatives of national and provincial Governments, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions. The committee would provide timely follow-up to the implementation of assigned resources and conduct surveys among students. The delegation urged the international community to address issues of relevance to children in programmes for sustainable development.

61. Several delegations expressed their gratitude to the outgoing Regional Director and thanked him for his efforts on behalf of children in their respective countries and the wider region.

62. The Executive Board adopted the seven country programme documents, on a no-objection basis, in decision 2016/1 (see annex).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

63. The President said that, in accordance with its decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Ghana, Malawi and Oman, as presented in document E/ICEF/2016/P/L.8.

64. The Executive Board adopted decision 2016/2 (see annex).

D. Evaluation reports and management response

(a) Plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014-2017: review and update for 2016-2017

65. The report, which had been made available on the UNICEF website, was presented by the Director, Evaluation, following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management. The plan had been presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2014, and had now been updated and revised to include the global thematic evaluations for 2014-2017.

66. A group of delegations expressed appreciation for the plan and for the consultation with Member States held prior to the present session. In light of the large number of Level 3 emergencies that had led to adjustments in the plan, the group urged UNICEF to continue to secure sufficient resources for evaluation work. The speaker stressed the importance of evaluations covering the seven outcome areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 as well as the cross-cutting areas.

67. Delegations welcomed the new topics that had been included in the plan, including technology in development, coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex and high-threat environments, and the synthesis of results from the evaluation of UNICEF humanitarian action in protracted emergencies.

68. A delegation expressed concern about the evaluations that had been superseded or not completed and enquired about the evaluation topics that had been removed owing to a "lack of demand". Noting that some evaluations had been reprogrammed, another speaker expressed trust that steps would be taken to avoid delays.

69. A group of delegations encouraged further collaboration with other United Nations entities and partners. Information was expected on the joint programmes of UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund on child marriage and female genital mutilation and cutting. In a general statement made at the beginning of the session, one delegation urged others to increase funding for both joint programmes, stating that the current shortfalls threatened the shared ambition to end those horrendous practices within a generation.

(b) Increasing access and equity in early childhood education in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States region, and management response

70. The report, which was available on the UNICEF website, was presented by the Director, Evaluation, following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management. The management response was then presented by the Regional Director, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. The evaluation was one of a series of five multi-country evaluations managed by the Regional Office over the past biennium.

71. A group of delegations acknowledged the positive results of the evaluation, in particular the constructive role that UNICEF played by using its position, flexibility and convening power, as well as by providing good-quality technical assistance. The group recognized the vital work of UNICEF and commended the organization for leveraging resources to early childhood education, contributing to increased access, facilitating a national dialogue and knowledge exchange and addressing system bottlenecks.

72. To improve the assessment of causality, the group encouraged the use of more varied methodologies and a more explicit presentation of the data on which conclusions were made. The group further encouraged a stronger framework for data collection, partnerships with researchers and academic institutions, a more in-depth human rights analysis and strengthened cross-sectoral approaches. The group welcomed the assessment of the political, social and economic contexts and looked forward to a broader consideration of contextual factors, such as the widespread placement of children in institutions, nutritional deficiencies, violence and abuse, the low priority given to social assistance and needs for parenting knowledge.

73. A delegation requested clarification on how the management response would address the concerns raised in the evaluation relating to the quality of early childhood education seemingly being compromised because of rapidly expanding access to education. Concerning another evaluation finding, the delegation suggested that UNICEF develop more explicit strategies, such as staff training, to promote intersectoral linkages among its programmes in early childhood education.

E. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and report of the Board of Auditors

74. The Executive Board had before it the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 and report of the Board of Auditors (A/70/5/Add.3), the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/70/380) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports on the United Nations funds and programmes for the year ended 31 December 2014 (A/70/338/Add.1).

75. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the reports were presented by the Comptroller.

76. Several delegations commended the fact that the Board of Auditors had once again issued an unqualified opinion for the period under review. One delegation expressed support for the budgetary approach taken by the Executive Board and its readiness to cooperate with UNICEF to further improve accountability and transparency.

77. One speaker noted the high quality of the report of the Board of Auditors and recommended that, for future sessions of the Executive Board, the auditors themselves present the findings of the report and that UNICEF include an item relating to the Board of Auditors in the agenda of future sessions.

78. A group of delegations noted an increase in reported cases of fraud and presumptive fraud, which was seen as a positive sign of increased fraud-risk awareness. However, another speaker urged the establishment or strengthening of measures for fraud prevention and strategies to counter fraud, taking into account the risk environment in which UNICEF operated.

79. One delegation took note of the report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors and encouraged the Executive Board to continue to report periodically on progress. The delegation also requested that the Executive Board report at its next session on the achievements made further to document A/70/380. A group of delegations expressed surprise that there was no decision relating to the agenda item, given the importance of the Board's oversight function.

80. Several delegations noted with concern the decrease in the rate of implementation of the previous recommendations of the Board of Auditors, from 73 per cent in 2012 to 42 per cent in 2013. UNICEF was encouraged to place greater emphasis on implementing the Board's recommendations, and the delegations looked forward to receiving additional information on that issue. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, replied that, while UNICEF was making every effort to implement the recommendations, some recommendations required an investment or time for harmonization across the organization, as well as capacity-building among staff.

81. Delegations also took note of the findings on the lack of a clear policy on the selection, monitoring and evaluation of implementing partners and urged UNICEF to take additional measures in this regard. A group of delegations agreed with the finding of the Board of Auditors relating to outstanding cash transfers and requested clarification on the situation. Another speaker also expressed reservations about the

monitoring of cash transfers. The group of delegations also urged UNICEF to carry out assurance activities in addition to the risk assessments of implementing partners.

82. The Deputy Executive Director, Field Results, noted that the report relating to 2014 did not reflect activities that had since been undertaken to address its findings. Following the 2015 launch of a "Managing for Results Initiative" and the allocation of $20 million in the 2014-2017 budget by the Executive Board to strengthen the management of implementing partners and the implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers, new policies and procedures had been issued, regional office capacities strengthened, training provided and tools developed to support the real-time monitoring of projects by implementing partners.

83. Several delegations supported the recommendation relating to budget management by the Board of Auditors that any grant extension be accompanied by a record of the rationale behind it and all steps taken to achieve the grant objectives within the stipulated time frame. The Comptroller stated that steps had already been taken to address the issue and the rationale was now consistently recorded. This was more an issue of data completeness in the enterprise resource planning system than of donor communication.

84. Delegations urged UNICEF to improve the implementation and monitoring of integrated monitoring and evaluation plans, which were the primary mechanism for UNICEF country offices and national partners to manage their monitoring and evaluation responsibilities and to facilitate effective results-based management. A group of delegations also emphasized the importance of strengthening internal controls to ensure that regional offices engaged in effective monitoring and evaluation of their country offices.

85. A speaker acknowledged the improvements made in addressing the concern previously expressed by the Board of Auditors with regard to the oversight of the National Committees for UNICEF, while stressing the need for UNICEF to establish reserve policies and practices that conformed with the guidelines for the Committees. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, noted the improvements that had been made in this regard, including that only one National Committee was considered to have an assets reserve and was making efforts to reduce that reserve.

86. A speaker urged UNICEF to take appropriate measures to hold both vendors and managers accountable for any shortcomings in carrying out their responsibilities relating to procurement. The speaker also emphasized the need for UNICEF to take measures to address cross-cutting issues, including the funding of after-service health insurance. The Comptroller responded that UNICEF was systematically increasing its reserves for that insurance and that there had recently been a joint effort by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF to invest in after-service health insurance reserves to ensure that investment returns from that insurance were reinvested into the fund.

F. UNICEF resource mobilization strategy

87. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the UNICEF resource mobilization strategy (UNICEF/2016/EB/3) was presented jointly by the Director, Public Partnerships Division, and the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships.

88. Several delegations commended UNICEF for its focus on quality resources and for its efforts to demonstrate programmatic flexibility, ensure predictable resources and broaden the funding base.

89. A group of delegations noted that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development called for integrated, comprehensive and multifaceted approaches, resulting in the increasing importance of high-quality, non-earmarked funding. Partners that earmarked funds should do so thematically to provide flexibility as well as alignment with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, thereby allowing UNICEF to improve long-term planning, reduce transaction costs, improve the effectiveness of its response and achieve better results in reaching the most vulnerable children.

90. In national statements made at the beginning of the session, some delegations stressed the importance of regular resources, with one delegation calling upon developed countries to increase their contribution to core resources, make non-core resources more flexible and honour their official development assistance commitments. A group of delegations expressed its concern that three quarters of funding still came from just 20 resource partners.

91. The same group of delegations welcomed the resource mobilization strategy, in particular, the "cases for support" produced by UNICEF for each of the outcome and cross-cutting areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, as those cases could be used as a tool to mobilize funding. They suggested that the documents might be more useful if the figures were updated regularly and made available on the UNICEF Transparency Portal.

92. The organization's active engagement with international partners and with other United Nations agencies to streamline work and increase coherence in pooled funding modalities was welcomed by the group of delegations, as was the exploration of innovative financing mechanisms, including those that aimed to provide predictable funds for rapid emergency response. Those comments were echoed by another delegation, which in a statement made at the beginning of the session remarked that the United Nations should more than ever be ready to continue to explore other sources of funding, such as domestic financing and innovative means of funding.

93. The group of delegations looked forward to following the development of the new strategic plan and the future fundraising strategy, which would necessarily have to take into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the outcomes of the next quadrennial comprehensive policy review and the rapidly changing fundraising environment.

94. A delegation requested an explanation for the reduction in resources in 2016 as compared with 2014 and 2015, especially in the light of the intensification of the resource mobilization effort. The Director, Public Partnerships, explained that the figures presented for 2015 and 2016 were an estimate and a projection, respectively. While UNICEF had made every effort to raise the maximum amount of resources for children, the decline from 2014 to 2015 was due to a large number of complex crises in 2014 and 2015and, to a great extent, to currency fluctuations. UNICEF had budgeted more conservatively for 2016, including more moderate estimates for its humanitarian requirements.

95. A delegation urged UNICEF to continue to support middle-income countries in their social programmes for women and children. The delegation highlighted its willingness to support South-South cooperation in the fields of health and education, by training personnel and providing equipment and expertise. The Director, Public Partnerships, noted that South-South cooperation was very much part of the organization's strategy.

96. In comments made under another agenda item, a delegation shared its concerns about the stagnation in official development assistance provided by traditional donors and the reassignment of that aid to deal with new challenges, which had had an impact on the availability of resources to UNICEF.

G. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2016 workplan and proposed budget

97. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, presented the division's 2016 workplan and proposed budget (E/ICEF/2016/AB/L.1).

98. Several delegations expressed their appreciation for the work of the National Committees for UNICEF. A group of delegations welcomed the budget's moderate growth and the inclusion, for the first time, of other resources funds in the workplan to help to finance management, development effectiveness and special purpose activities. Such inclusion improved transparency and facilitated a better understanding of the role of private fundraising and partnerships within UNICEF. The group, however, sought clarification on the provenance of the other resources funds as well as some aspects of the planned expenditures.

99. A delegation welcomed the expansion of fundraising activities to country offices and supported the recent inclusion of the country office private sector fundraising costs in the private fundraising and partnerships budget.

100. Several delegations urged a focus on ensuring a continued increase in regular resources, with one speaker requesting more information regarding the reasons for expecting an increase in 2016. The Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships, responded that UNICEF had carefully chosen to invest more in private sector fundraising activities that were expected to generate additional regular resources, namely pledge donors and legacies. There was potential for growth in legacy fundraising in countries beyond the few that were the traditional sources. In addition, the budget had been constructed on the assumption that the United States dollar would not fluctuate.

101. A delegation noted the increasing importance of partnerships and innovative funding, with the contributions of Governments supported by those of financial institutions, foundations, enterprises and individual donors. Another delegation urged UNICEF to continue to expand and deepen partnerships with additional non-legacy development actors. Advocacy was seen as important to promote corporate social responsibility and a shared vision was necessary to ensure that programmes were consistent and that the specific priorities of member States, as set out in country programmes, were taken into account.

102. A delegation underscored the importance of the National Committees for UNICEF in implementing the strategic direction set by the Private Fundraising and

Partnerships Plan, 2014-2017, and urged that they be provided with the necessary technical guidance, tools and operational support. The Committees not only were prominent sources of regular resources, raising funds from the private sector, including individual donors, but also played a crucial role in promoting children's rights and raising awareness of the challenges that they faced.

103. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF reported on the Committees' record contribution of $1.154 billion to UNICEF in 2015, which represented approximately 85 per cent of the organization's private sector revenue. He stressed the evolution of the Committees' advocacy work, which, in addition to solid relationships with global corporate partners, included the development of ties with Governments and the investment of resources to advocate legal and behavioural changes that honoured the dignity of every child. However, the refugee and migrant crisis had had an impact on the Committees' countries in ways not seen since the foundation of UNICEF, forcing a redefinition of the type of advocacy necessary to protect children. The Committees looked forward to collaborating with UNICEF to strengthen their partnership, increase their advocacy efforts and raise additional funds to ensure a better future for every child.

104. The Executive Board adopted decision 2016/3 (see annex).

H. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2016

105. The provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2016 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

I. Adoption of draft decisions

106. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2016/1-3 (see annex).

J. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

107. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, said that, as highlighted during the session, 2015 had been a critical year of global agreements, which made 2016 a critical year for global action to ensure that those agreements actually produced results for children, in particular the most vulnerable.

108. Five issues had featured prominently in the deliberations of the session. The year 2016 was critical for implementing the global goals and making real progress towards more efficient and effective humanitarian action for children. It was essential to recognize interlinkages, such as those between climate and humanitarian and development interventions. The UNICEF response to the refugee and migrant crisis and to the outbreak of the Zika virus disease demonstrated the importance of working across a range of country contexts, and was a reminder of both the organization's universal mandate and the universality of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recognition of the importance of regular resources in reaching the most vulnerable children was appreciated and it was hoped that

engagement with the Executive Board to secure flexible funds would continue. UNICEF looked forward to strengthening the system-wide approach to sustainable development and expected the new quadrennial comprehensive policy review would provide a strategic framework and a direction for the United Nations development system that would support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

109. As this would be her final Executive Board session, the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, thanked the Executive Board and the Bureau for their support, which had been and would continue to be critical to UNICEF in its work to deliver results for children.

110. The President remarked that, as UNICEF was celebrating its seventieth anniversary in 2016, it could reflect with pride on its work over seven decades of protecting and saving the lives of the most vulnerable population in an increasingly complex world. The session had been very successful and marked by a spirit of collaboration and compromise that had led to the adoption of three draft decisions by the Executive Board. The broad engagement of delegations from across the regional groups had contributed to a rich and stimulating discussion.

111. As members of the Executive Board convened for informal briefings and consultations in the lead-up to the annual and second regular sessions, they should be firmly guided by the vision and the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This would help to ensure that the work of UNICEF over the final two years of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 paved the way for a new plan that would integrate the global commitments made, through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2016

2016/1
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Argentina, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.1-L.7), were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 9 to 27 November 2015, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Argentina, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay (E/ICEF/2016/P/L.1-L.7).

First regular session
2 February 2016

2016/2
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

Takes note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Ghana, Malawi and Oman, which were approved by the Executive Director, as presented in the table in document E/ICEF/2016/P/L.8.

First regular session
3 February 2016

2016/3
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2016 workplan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for the 2016 fiscal year (special purpose)

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2016 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted special purpose expenses of $149 million, as detailed in the table below.

(in millions of United States dollars)

Investment funds costs funded by special purpose — regular resources	60
Other private sector fundraising costs funded by special purpose — regular resources	46
Total private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose — regular resources	**106**
Private sector fundraising and partnerships costs funded by special purpose — other resources	43
Total special purpose expenses	**149**

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenses, as summarized in column II of table 2 of document E/ICEF/2016/AB/L.1, and to decrease or increase expenses up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of the same table, should the apparent revenue from fundraising decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in para. 1 above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2016 approved workplan.

B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2016

The Executive Board

1. *Notes* that, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2016, Private Fundraising and Partnerships revenue is budgeted at $1.44 billion, as shown in column II of table 2 in document E/ICEF/2016/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* the allocation of investment funds, amounting to $60 million for 2016;

2. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2017 of $10.6 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation), to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2017;

3. *Stresses* that private fundraising and partnerships for UNICEF shall continue to be conducted in strict compliance with the established guidelines, rules and regulations of UNICEF;

4. *Recalls* that funds from private fundraising and partnerships shall be allocated in accordance with the development priorities of programme countries as

reflected in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 and country programme documents;

5. *Emphasizes* the need for UNICEF to continue to implement in full and on time all recommendations of the Board of Auditors, in particular those relating to the fundraising activities and the management of the National Committees for UNICEF;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to include in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships financial report, which is presented annually at the second regular session, detailed information on its activities relating to its engagement with the business sector and the results achieved in the following three areas: fundraising; child rights and business; and non-financial engagement.

First regular session
3 February 2016